

VZCZCXRO8555
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHBP #0277/01 1271142
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 071142Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0299
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS 0637
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 BAMAKO 000277

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [ML](#)
SUBJECT: LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS SET STAGE FOR 2012
PRESIDENTIAL RACE

REF: BAMAKO 00146

1.(SBU) Summary: Unofficial results from Mali's April 26 local elections show the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA) party reinforcing its position as Mali's largest political party, edging out the Union for the Republic and Democracy (URD) for the greatest percentage of the roughly 11,000 local officials elected last Sunday. Election day proved disastrous for Mali's main opposition party - the Rally for Mali (RPM) - which lost nearly a thousand seats, leaving the RPM with a paltry six percent of local office holders. Alleged incidents of fraud and election related appeals appear to be linked to participants' generally low literacy and skills levels and in line with fraud allegation rates from previous elections in Mali. These incidents were unlikely to affect electoral outcomes. Authorities generally acted swiftly to prevent suspected fraud and arrested 94 persons for attempted electoral fraud in the District of Bamako alone. As Mali's last nation wide election before the 2012 presidential contest, ADEMA and the URD - previously united in support of President Amadou Toumani Toure - will now vie against each other in a bid to succeed President Toure in 2012. End Summary.

And the Winners Are

2.(SBU) On April 26 Malians in 703 local communes went to 20,265 polling stations to elect 10,789 communal councilors. Malian officials described overall turnout rates among Mali's nearly 7 million voters as disappointing, but national level participation rates remain unavailable. Turnout was noticeably higher in rural areas, with some individual communes reporting participation rates of 50 percent or more. In Bamako voter turnout ranged from a high of 35 percent in some areas to a low of 15 percent in others. The average participation rate for Bamako was 22 percent which, as Bamako Governor Ibrahima Fefe Kone noted, matched or exceeded turnout rates for Mali's last two presidential elections.

3.(SBU) ADEMA won four of Bamako's six communes. The URD carried one commune, and an independent list headed by the well-funded Moussa Mara captured another. This was a victory two years in the making for the relatively young Mara. In 2007 Mara nearly bounced then National Assembly president and RPM leader Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who was still reeling from his resounding defeat in the earlier presidential election, out of the National Assembly altogether. Keita prevailed in an embarrassingly close second round run-off victory, and many suspected the invisible hand of President Toure, offered in recompense for going quietly into defeat after the presidential election, may have helped put Keita over the top.

4.(SBU) Overall in Bamako, ADEMA netted 73 of the 250 councilor posts up for grabs. The URD placed second with 45 posts, and the RPM third with 35. ADEMA carried all of

Mali's 8 regions plus Bamako, and six of Mali's eight regional capitals: Kayes, Sikasso, Segou, Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao. Independent lists attached to President Toure's dying Mouvement Citoyen (Ref. A) fared well in Koulikoro and Kidal, splitting the difference in Koulikoro with another minor political party and carrying the town of Kidal outright. The Mouvement Citoyen's list in Kidal was led by Kidal Chamber of Commerce president Abdousalam ag Assalat and out-pollled the ADEMA list headed by Kidal's ruling ag Intallah family. Ag Assalat is now well positioned to either replace Atiyoub ag Intallah as Mayor of Kidal or seek the presidency of the Kidal Regional Assembly.

Whither the Opposition?

5.(SBU) Election results for Mali's three main opposition parties - the RPM, the Party for National Rebirth (PARENA), and the African Solidarity party for Democracy and Independence (SADI) - were dismal. The RPM's number of office holders was reduced by half, dropping from 1,596 locally elected officials in 2004 to a measly 767. The RPM's main public mouthpiece, the daily newspaper Info Matin, attempted to put a positive spin on this result by claiming that while the number of RPM held posts had declined, the RPM was now represented in more communes than before.

6.(SBU) The RPM was handily outspent by ADEMA and the URD. Public financing of political parties is based in large part on past electoral performance and therefore provides a distinct financial advantage to incumbents. ADEMA which has

BAMAKO 00000277 002 OF 004

the most public office holders nationwide, received the greatest amount of public campaign funds, totaling approximately USD 700,000; the URD netted USD 400,000; and the RPM only USD 230,000. This enabled ADEMA to campaign in all of Mali's 703 communes - excepting three of the most isolated, distant communes in northern Mali - by spending campaign funds on rallies, fabric, T-shirts, campaign posters, and voter transportation on election day. The URD campaigned in 688 communes and used its public campaign funds to purchase 600 Chinese motorcycles to help rural party representatives turn out the vote. The RPM competed in 611 communes. Noticeably absent from the RPM effort was its president, Keita, who made little to no effort to drum up support for RPM affiliated candidates. A week after the election one local newspaper remarked on the conspicuous absence of the RPM's "charismatic president" on the campaign trail and reported that Keita had in fact traveled to Paris, on the private jet of his longtime political ally Gabonese President Omar Bongo, for treatment of an undisclosed medical problem.

7.(SBU) Also absent from the campaign trail was Mali's other leading opposition leader, PARENA president Tiebile Drame. Drame seemingly abdicated his role as PARENA leader in February to serve a higher calling as the UN's special envoy to the crisis in Madagascar. Although Drame's status as former President Alpha Oumar Konare's son-in-law means he can never be counted out, his presence would have likely made little difference for PARENA which remains safely ensconced within the second tier of Malian political parties. PARENA received only USD 90,000 in public campaign finance funds and was only able to compete in 489 communes. It captured just 422 posts on April 26, which was a decline of nearly 200 from 2004. All of PARENA's election officials hail from the regions of Kayes and Koulikoro.

8.(SBU) The quixotic independent opposition party SADI netted 247 seats, all from the agricultural regions of Segou and Sikasso. SADI's Secretary General and de facto leader, National Assembly Deputy Oumar Mariko, advocates nationalizing industries and halting privatization of parastatals like the Malian national cotton company (CMDT).

Mariko's outspoken support for cotton farmers and vociferous criticism of the notoriously corrupt Office du Niger has turned SADI into what might be called a niche political party popular with farmers' groups, labor unions, and anti-globalization activists.

The Fine Print

9.(SBU) A number of second-tier political parties also secured some local councilor seats. The National Committee for Democratic Initiatives (CNID) and the Patriotic Movement for Renewal (MPR), which are respectively Mali's fourth and fifth largest political parties, finished fourth and seventh in overall number of elected officials. The Convergence for Malian Development (CODEM) party's fifth place showing was unusual given that we had not previously regarded CODEM as a national level party. The Union for Democracy and Development (UDD) and the remnants of Mali's first political party - the Soudanese Union of the Rally for African Democracy (US-RDA) - rounded out the top ten finishers:

ADEMA	-	3,164	seats
URD	-	1,917	seats
RPM	-	767	seats
CNID	-	478	seats
CODEM	-	406	seats
PARENA	-	422	seats
MPR	-	359	seats
SADI	-	247	seats
UDD	-	159	seats
US-RDA	-	119	seats

Allegations of Fraud, both Real and Imagined

10.(SBU) Anxiety in the run-up to the local elections over the state of the Malian electoral lists notwithstanding, allegations of fraud stemming from the April 26 communal elections appear isolated. The most serious incidents occurred in the town of Ber east of Timbuktu and Tarkint north of Gao (septel). On election day in Bamako authorities arrested 94 people for suspected electoral fraud. Most were arrested for possession of stolen voter registration cards. Some were arrested while attempting to bribe voters as they

BAMAKO 00000277 003 OF 004

entered polling stations. In one incident police arrested a candidate for trying to physically prevent voters from entering the polls - he alleged his opponents had earlier prevented his supporters from voting.

12.(SBU) Revealing once again the lightening speed of Malian justice when authorities are so motivated, election officials expedited prosecution of the 94 suspected fraudsters. According to the government newspaper L'Essor, courts have already released 31 individuals for lack of evidence, sentenced one individual to two months in jail, and sentenced fifteen others to one month in prison.

13.(SBU) A local NGO, Support for the Electoral Process in Mali (APEM), which sent 341 observers to polling stations across Mali on election day, catalogued no irregularities at 76 percent of the polling stations it visited, and documented irregularities unlikely to affect the outcome of the election at the remaining 23 percent. APEM attributed the minor irregularities primarily to inadequate training of poll workers. APEM observed that Article 88 of Mali's electoral law, which allows a voter without identification to vote provided the voter is accompanied by two witnesses assigned to the same polling station, provided an easy avenue for fraud but concluded that the impact of fraudulent misuse of Article 88 during the communal elections was minimal.

14.(SBU) The commune of Bougouni, which is near Mali's southern border with Cote d'Ivoire, combined its local elections with a legislative bi-election to replace a deceased National Assembly Deputy. According to local newspaper reports, of the 86,000 votes cast in Bougouni, Mali's Constitutional Court voided 12,000 (or approximately 14 percent) of the legislative ballots for various irregularities ranging from failures to reconcile the number of ballots cast with the number of voters and what appear to be mix ups between local level ballots and legislative ballots - a problem suggesting that running two separate elections on the same day in Bougouni may not have been the best idea. Bougouni will hold a second round for the legislative election on May 17 between the top two finishers: ADEMA and the URD.

Comment: Next Stop, 2012

15.(SBU) Local election results can be explained in part by the structural advantages that Mali's electoral system provides to parties already in power. Public financing of political parties is based on past electoral performance, providing a financial advantage to incumbents. Moreover, local communal councilors are elected by proportional representation from party lists in which voters vote for a party rather than a candidate. As a result, most voters have no idea what candidates are on their party's list. This, too, redounds to the advantage of established parties with name recognition, ready money, and strong get out the vote machines. This may explain why ADEMA triumphed even in areas where its incumbents were embroiled in controversy. ADEMA won a convincing victory, for example, in Bamako's third commune even though its party list was headed by the current mayor of Bamako, Adama Sangare, whose real estate manipulations have earned him the enmity of large segments of the population.

16.(SBU) Opposition parties' remarkably weak showing on April 26 seemingly sets up an unusual battle for 2012 as the two major forces behind President Toure's winning political coalition for 2007 - ADEMA and the URD - will now set their sights on one another. Of the two, ADEMA is better organized and better funded. But ADEMA also has history of fracturing during presidential election cycles. The RPM and the URD are both ADEMA election year spin-offs. RPM leader Ibrahim Boubacar Keita left ADEMA in 2001 after a falling out with then President Alpha Oumar Konare who made it clear that Keita was not going to be ADEMA's presidential nominee for 2002. The politician who was ADEMA's 2002 presidential nominee, Soumaila Cisse, left the party in disgust to found the URD after Konare shifted his support to the independent candidate Amadou Toumani Toure for the second round of the 2002 presidential voting.

17.(SBU) During the 2007 presidential election ADEMA fractured again as several senior party leaders, led by former Minister of Defense Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga, opposed the party's decision to endorse President Toure's re-election instead of running a candidate of its own. While Maiga was welcomed back into the party in 2008, serious divisions

BAMAKO 00000277 004 OF 004

remain between ADEMA's two most eligible candidates for the 2012 nomination: National Assembly president Dioundou Traore and Prime Minister Modibo Sidibe. Cisse, who has bided his time since losing in the second round of the 2002 presidential election, may emerge as the winner of a protracted internal struggle between Traore and Sidibe for ADEMA's 2012 nomination. Cisse's decision to graciously sit out the 2007 presidential contest may also earn him some support from an outgoing President Toure, and the URD's strong showing on April 26 will provide Cisse with the local networks and organizational structure needed to support a serious presidential run.

